

8:30 a.m., Friday, October 21, 2022  
State Highway Commission Meeting Minutes

*On Friday, October 21, 2022, the Nebraska State Highway Commission convened at Central Platte NRD located at 215 Kaufman Avenue in Grand Island, Nebraska. The agenda, a recording of meeting, attendance sheets, and handouts relevant to the business of this meeting are a part of the permanent minutes of record and are on file at NDOT Central Headquarters. The Nebraska Open Meetings Act (Statutes 84-1407 to 84-1414) was posted in the meeting room.*

## MEETING NOTICE

- Notice of the regularly scheduled meeting, including the time, location, and agenda, was advertised on the Department of Transportation and the State of Nebraska's websites no less than ten days prior to the meeting.
- The agenda was emailed or mailed to commission members, NDOT staff, and interested persons no less than ten days prior to the meeting.
- A media release was emailed to all statewide outlets on September 30, 2022.
- The meeting agenda was kept current and available to the public in the Communication Division of the Nebraska Department of Transportation, 1500 Highway 2, Lincoln, Nebraska. No changes were made to the agenda within 48 hours prior to commencement.
- Copies of the meeting agenda were posted and available to the public at the entrance to the meeting room.
- There were 10 people in attendance virtually.

## COMMISSIONERS PRESENT

- |                                 |                                 |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| • Commissioner Mary K. Gerdes   | District 1                      |
| • Commissioner                  | Vacant                          |
| • Commissioner David Copple     | District 3 – Attended via WebEx |
| • Commissioner James H. Kindig  | District 4                      |
| • Commissioner Doug Leafgreen   | District 5                      |
| • Commissioner Jim Hawks        | District 6                      |
| • Commissioner Greg Wolford     | District 7                      |
| • Commissioner Jerome Fagerland | District 8                      |
| • Director, John Selmer         | Absent                          |

Sarah Soula, NDOT External Affairs Manager, was recording. A transcript of the meeting is available upon request. Nebraska State Highway Commission meetings are conducted in compliance with the statutes of the Nebraska Open Meetings Act.

#### CALL TO ORDER

- Commissioner Gerdes called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.
- The Chair requested an attendance roll call. A quorum was present.

#### MINUTES

- Approval of September 23, 2022, meeting minutes
  - Motion for approval made by Commissioner Wolford; Commissioner Hawks seconded.
  - Motion carried by rollcall vote, 7-0, Commissioner Copple attended via WebEx.

#### INTRODUCTIONS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Introductions:
  - Joe Werning and Rusty Simerl, Federal Highway Administration
  - Lee Vrooman, Director of Engineering, City of Hastings
  - Tim Golka, Director of Engineering, City of Grand Island
  - Steve Reihle, Hall County Engineer

#### MEETING BUSINESS

- **Director's Remarks and Introductions**  
**Khalil Jaber, Deputy Director – Engineering**
  - Director Selmer is in Florida attending a Transportation conference.
  - Update on bipartisan infrastructure law or what's referred to as the Infrastructure Job Act: NDOT received \$400 Million apportionment
    - Unfortunately, don't have the spending authority to spend all of this
    - Only funded through Dec. 16 under continuous resolution. However, this is not going to slow us down in terms of putting out the projects we have scheduled to complete.
    - NDOT headquarters is working hard to prepare these projects and utilize the funding we have already received and are very optimistic that we will see a full appropriation come through for the federal fiscal year.
    - We're always looking to apply for discretionary grants that may come our way.
  - Challenges:
    - Workforce: In terms of the winter operations, it is going to hit us hard. It's going to be difficult for us because of low staffing. So, we are trying to identify key routes that will need to be a priority in making sure those are accessible and safe in a timely manner (i.e. I-80)
    - Safety: At the end of the month of September, there were 36 fatalities. Over 30 percent were not wearing their seat belts. Buckle Up, Phone Down is a key message we want to keep repeating and repeating and hope people listen and stay safe.
  - Key Projects:
    - Grand Island West, US-281 Junction on US-30: making very good progress, all the offers for right-of-way have been mailed out (dealing with nearly 48 contracts).
    - Hastings Southeast project: also making very good progress, this from the old "Build Nebraska Act," optimistic that they will be completed in the next few years.
    - US-81 York to Columbus corridor: part of the 600 miles expressway, consultants on board, starting planning part of it, looking forward to discussing with the public.
  - Thank you to Sarah Soula for always making these meetings a success. Introduce staff from Lincoln: Shannon Ankeny and Sophia Lopez from Communications Division.

- **Commissioner Welcome**

- **James Kindig, District 4 Commissioner**

- Every two years District 4 has the chance to host. Always great to be in Grand Island.
    - Fatalities weighing heavy on our hearts, year-to-date there have been approximately 215 fatalities. From January to the end of September there have been 206 fatalities, 181 crashes, compared to 159 fatalities a year ago to that date.
    - Governor's Highway Safety Association Statistics:
      - Rural roads account for almost half the fatalities. Risk of a fatal accident on a rural road is 62 percent higher versus urban areas.
      - Over half of fatal accidents, occupants are not wearing their seatbelt.
      - Other top causes: speeding, distractions, alcohol and drug use
      - Not all crashes are because of road conditions: 61 percent of crashes on are straight roads.
      - Conclusion: Driving safe, creates safe roads.
    - NDOT Safety enhancements: changing traffic flows, conditions, structures, etc., to make them as safe as we can, education to change the way people drive (i.e., wearing seatbelts).

- **District Presentation**

- **Wes Wahlgren, District 4 Engineer**

- Introduction of Eric Klein, District 4 Construction Engineer
    - Surface Transportation Meeting: District 4 Update Presentation:
      - Comprises 17 counties in south central Nebraska, has a population of 214,918, and an area of 9,751 sq. mi.
      - Contains 1709 centerline miles of highway, 623 bridge length structures
      - Centerline miles of road contain 110 miles of I-80 and 138 miles of Expressway
      - Problem: 6,734,000 police-reported crashes per year – 36,560 fatalities, 2,710,000 injuries, 4,807,000 property damage crashes, 1.13 fatality rate per 100 million vehicle miles traveled.
      - Causes of Crashes and Injuries: More than 32,000 people killed in traffic crashes:
        - 9,500 were not using seat belts, car seats, booster seats
        - 10,000 were result of drunk driving
        - 9,500 were impacted by speeding
        - Distracted driving and cell phone usage is a huge problem
      - Solution – Safe System Approach: Collaborative, systemic approach to improving safety; Systems (agencies, public, transportation networks, legislation, funding) that work together to prevent fatalities and serious injuries
      - Center Line Rumble Strips:
        - 44-64 percent reduction in head-on fatal and injury crashes on two-lane rural roads
        - Highway Safety Manual (HSM) states that on two-lane rural undivided roadways these reduce head-on and sideswipe opposite crashes by 21 percent.
        - Installing on all head-to-head traffic resurfacing projects.
      - Widen pavements to 28-inch tops
      - SafetyEdge technology: dropping the edge at 30 degrees prevents vertical drop-off (cause of many fatal rural crashes)

- Roundabouts: 82 percent reduction in fatal and injury accidents. One example at Adam Central west of Hastings with young drivers trying to turn or cross the highway.
- Offset Right Turn Lane: allows for a stopped vehicle to see past a turning vehicle at the intersection and gets the turning vehicle out of the through traffic lane
- Reduced Left-Turn Conflict Intersections:
  - Restricted Crossing U-Turn (RCUT): 54 percent reduction in fatal and injury crashes
- **Question from the audience: Can a semi make that U-turn?**
  - Answer: Yes. When they built the one at Humphrey, they did end up having to make the bulb-out larger because semis were initially running off the edge. Thank you for the question.
  - Median Cable Barriers: 97 percent reduction in cross-median crashes on rural four-lane freeways Construction Safety Enhancements: Centerline cones in advance of flagger stations, notched wedge detail (acts like safety edge), horizontal curve widening (adds an additional two feet)
- Build Nebraska Act Projects in District 4
  - US-6, Hastings Southeast: From east end of current five-lane section on J Street to Showboat Road
    - Project Length = 2.4 miles
    - Estimated Cost = \$38.1 million
  - US-30, US-281 West: From west end of current four-lane section west of US-281 in Grand Island to just west of Monitor Road (end of four-lane on US-30)
    - Project Length = Approximately 3.9 miles
    - Estimated Cost = Approximately \$41.3 million
  - US-81, York to Columbus: From north end of York Bypass four-lane to four-lane south of Columbus (planning stage, broken into smaller segments once finalized).
    - Project Length = 40.1 miles
    - Estimated Cost = \$287 million
- Planning Process:
  - Districts are allocated a budget based on its 20-year needs and the amount of funding available
  - The District Engineer (Eric Klein), Kate Ames, and Jim (Commissioner Kindig) select the projects.
  - Some of the tools used to select projects are the Nebraska Serviceability index (NSI), International Roughness Index (IRI), Traffic Counts, Accident Reports, public input etc.
- Current Program Book: District 4 Improvement Map is on page 21
  - FY 2023 Projects are shown in RED (Page 22): contains 16 projects with an average estimated cost of \$5.2 million, totaling \$83.554 million
  - FY 2024 – 2028 Projects are shown in BLUE (Pages 23-26): contains 92 projects with an average estimated cost of \$6.18 million, totaling \$568.554 million (These numbers do not include the Capital Improvement Projects discussed earlier).
- FY2023 Projects
  - S-40D, Prosser Spur (lower volume spur): Mill, Resurface, Bridge Repair
    - Project Length = 5.3 Miles, Estimated Cost = \$4.3 million, Average Daily Traffic (ADT) = 648
  - S-93A, Henderson Spur: Resurface, Bridge Repair
    - Project Length = 6.7 Miles, Est. Cost = \$4.1 million, ADT = 2121 North of I-80 to 3140 South of I-80

- N-14, Superior North and South: Mill, Resurface, Bridge Repair
  - Project Length = 6.4 Miles, Est. Cost = \$6.3 million, ADT = 2,244
- N-14, In Clay Center and North: Mill, Resurface
  - Project Length = 5.4 Miles, Est. Cost = \$3.2 million, ADT = 2531
- N-22, Scotia East: Resurface
  - Project Length = 8.4 Miles, Est. Cost = \$6.3 million, ADT = 749
- US-34, In Grand Island and South (Southbound): Mill, Resurface, Bridge Repair
  - Project Length = 5.4 Miles, Est. Cost = \$7.2 million, ADT = 15,062
- I-80, Phillips to Giltner: Mill, Resurface, Bridge Repair
  - Project Length = 6.3 Miles, Est. Cost = \$9.0 million, ADT = 26,686
- I-80, York to Waco: Mill, Resurface, Bridge Repair
  - Project Length = 8.1 Miles, Est. Cost = \$11.3 million, ADT = 28,328
- US-81, Hebron South to Bruning North: Shoulder Reconstruction, Bridge Repair
  - Project Length = 16.9 Miles, Est. Cost = \$11.1 million, ADT = 5,038
- US-136, Nuckolls Couty Line to L-85F: Resurface, Bridges
  - Project Length = 13.5 Miles, Est. Cost = \$9.0 million, ADT = 1,114
- US-281, Red Cloud North (includes Cowles Spur): Mill, Resurface, Culverts, Bridge Replacement
  - Project Length = 9.8 Miles, Est. Cost = \$7.3 million, ADT = 1278
- FY2024 Projects
  - N-2, Hazard East: Resurface, Asphalt Overlay
    - Project Length = 6.2 Miles, Est. Cost = \$4.9 million, ADT = 1,523
  - US-6, In Fairmont and East: Resurface (3- to 4-inch ruts, milled and chipsealed to hold until 2024)
    - Project Length = 12.4 Miles, Est. Cost = \$5.8 million, ADT = 1,711
  - N-10, N-40 North: Resurface
    - Project Length = 4.8 Miles, Est. Cost = \$2.5 million, ADT = 4,760
  - N-41, Clay Center East: Resurface
    - Project Length = 11.6 Miles, Est. Cost = \$6.0 million, ADT = 669
  - N-74, Kearney/Adams County Line E: Resurface (has seen a lot of patching, time to completely resurface)
    - Project Length = 18.1 Miles, Est. Cost = \$7.9 million, ADT = 568
  - N-74, Ong Spur to US-81: Resurface
    - Project Length = 13.3 Miles, Est. Cost = \$4.6 million, ADT = 915
  - N-74, Strang Spur East (includes Strang and Ohiowa Spurs): Resurface (edge deterioration happening)
    - Project Length = 11.7 Miles, Est. Cost = \$5.8 million, ADT = 627
  - N-11, South Junction N-58 to N-92: Resurface (see a lot of offtracking on curves, needs to be widened)
    - Project Length = 12.0 Miles, Est. Cost = \$5.6 million, ADT = 991
  - I-80, Dawson County Line to Odessa: Concrete Pavement
    - Project Length = 9.5 Miles, Est. Cost = \$45.3 million, ADT = 23,060
  - I-80, Minden to Gibbon: Mill, Resurface
    - Project Length = 4.5 Miles, Est. Cost = \$1.8 million, ADT = 25,110
  - I-80, York to Utica: Cable Median Barrier
    - Project Length = 14.7 Miles, Est. Cost = \$5.5 million, ADT = 28,328
  - US-81, Belvidere North Southbound (Includes US-136 Bridge over Dry Creek- 2.5 miles east of US-81): Bridge Replacement (increase clearance over railroad to 25 feet)
    - Estimated Cost = \$8.0 million, ADT = 4,764

- US-281, St. Libory North and South: Resurface, Asphalt Overlay
  - Project Length = 6.1 Miles, Est. Cost = \$7.2 million, ADT = 4,586
- Questions:
  - **Q. Commissioner Wolford: When you talked about the safety improvements, I assume you're talking statewide? Not just District 4?**
    - **A.** Yes, that's statewide. That came from our Strategic Safety Team. We have representatives from Roadway Design, Traffic (Engineering), I'm on it, but we're thinking statewide.
  - **Q. Commissioner Wolford: Do you have an estimate for changing these 24-top roads to 28?**
    - **A.** I don't have an estimate. We're using Safety funds for that.
  - **Q. Commissioner Wolford: That's a big deal for these roads. You're going to end up doing grading and culverts and people don't think four foot more is a big deal, but it is.**
    - **A.** Yes. It depends on the road too. A lot of our roads have good earth shoulders on them, and it won't cost that much, but other will require grading.
  - **Q. Commissioner Wolford: So, is that now baked into the formula here?**
    - **A.** The 28-foot is 1,000 ADT and higher, so not all roads will get that, but center-line rumble strips will be all the roads. I think the last estimate I saw was \$870 a mile to install those.
    - **Khalil Jaber:** We rolled this out late last year. When we ran the overall analysis, we saw a lot of segments that have the six-foot earth shoulder, we were able to add that into the cost and see the added benefits. This is federally funded and eligible.
    - **Wes Wahlgren:** An added benefit is it allows us to add in the edge-line rumble stripes. They're installed under the white line giving wet reflectivity during rain and will improve our safety. It will also get the beveled edge.
  - **Q. Commissioner Fagerland: Will there be a possibility, getting into this speed limit discrepancies, if you have roads that are not built to sustain the speed of an ADT of 1,000 or more, are we going to have a potential lowering of speed limits on those with a lesser ADT?**
    - **A. Khalil Jaber:** We conduct traffic study for each location. When we look at the speed limit, unless there is something that would prevent us from carrying the same regular speed in that corridor, you're probably not going to see a whole lot of change. If there is some key restriction that comes up in that study, that's when we would drop the speed limit.
  - **Q. Commissioner Gerdes: On that 61 percent of rural roads, I know we are mainly talking about highways, which we are responsible. How about county roads, do you know about that? Do we have statistics on that?**
    - **A.** I believe those numbers include county roads. We do get reports on the crashes, I didn't bring one along, but they do give a breakdown of what type of road it is.
  - **Q. Commissioner Gerdes: I realize that counties are responsible for their county roads, but when there is a safety issue, it doesn't matter what type of road you crash on, it's still a crash, but the responsibility for maintenance and safety, whose is it?**
    - **A.** We are going to make Safety funds available to counties for beveled edges, and 28-foot tops when they resurface, but since it is a federal aid project, we'll have to see how that goes. We want

counties to look at bevel edge and other safety features to install on their roads.

- **Q. Commissioner Gerdes: Have you brought this up to NACO (National Association of Counties)?**
  - **Steve Riehle, Hall County Engineer:** I was going to bring this up later, but at our December meeting in Kearney, we will be talking about the reach out from the Department of Transportation to counties that is available to do the 28-foot top out of Safety Funds. NACO will be at the meeting as well as the Nebraska Association of County Engineers, County Highway Superintendents, and County Surveyors.

#### PUBLIC INPUT

- **Bob Reinke, Thayer County:** I speak for Thayer County regarding US-136. I want to thank you for coming. I had limited information when I put this together, and I think some of this you are already addressing. US-136 is one of the worst conditions in the area. We really need tougher resurfacing that is going to last. We get a lot of heavy traffic with semis. Widening, it sounds like you are on top of that. We've only got 10 feet, four inches between the yellow and white lines. The canyons along here, we've had a road grader on end with its wheels sticking up hanging in the air. That canyon is deep and there's no guardrail. Something needs to be done there. We really need a turning lane for Reinke Manufacturing on 5300 Road. People come flying up over the hill. Speed limit signs west of Deshler should move one-mile further west. The last one is patches. They patch them, and they fail. They patch them, and they fail. So, a lot of steep drop offs, edges breaking off and no guardrails.
  - **Q. Commissioner Hawks: Any plans for improvement on this stretch of road?**
    - **A. Wes Wahlgren:** Yes, we have plans for next season to put a 28-foot top on it.
  - **Commissioner Kindig:** Wes and I drove by Reinke and observed what you were talking about, and Wes has this as a priority, but we appreciate you coming out to talk more about this.
- **Cindy Johnson, Grand Island Area Chamber of Commerce:** Welcome and thank you for coming out to Grand Island. We really appreciate it when you come out here. I'd like to thank Wes and his team for the work that they do and the collaborative effort they use when working on roads that are going to have an impact on the community of Grand Island or the County of Hall. There are a couple events we have throughout the year, Nebraska State Fair and Husker Harvest Days, that bring more people on our roads, and it could become very cumbersome to have an unresponsive Department of Transportation team. We have a team that knows when there is going to be extra traffic with unfamiliar drivers coming to Grand Island, and they do a great job. We are also excited to see the newest Old Hwy 30.
  - **Khalil Jaber:** I appreciate the comments and one of the goals for the Department is to have that collaboration with the communities. Thank you for sharing and thank you to Wes and his team.
- **Steve Riehle, Hall County Engineer:** Safety is also important to us as counties. We've arranged for our December meeting in Kearney, we've asked Don Butler, Highway Safety Engineer, from NDOT Highway Safety, to come to talk about two things: Highway Safety Improvement Programs at the county levels, and we want to resurrect the County Safety Improvement Plans. We tried a while ago to get this to take off and it wasn't very successful then due to personality clashes at the county level. There are some holes we can plug there. The plug I see that we really need to get involved in is at the schools, high school, with kids, young adults, and the sheriff's office. They've got to be a part of this program. Educate people about seat belts, and their link to fatalities.
  - **Q. Commissioner Hawks: These County Safety Improvement projects, were they started amongst Association or was that something that came down from Department of Transportation?**

- A. It came down from the Department of Transportation. They had a consultant come out asking the counties for volunteers. I good with volunteers, but sometimes we need to recruit as well, make sure they know what they're in for, make sure they support it, and we don't just need the county superintendent on board, we need the county commissioners, the county board, the county sheriff, the school system, etc.
- **Q. Commissioner Gerdes: What role, if any, do insurance companies play? They are the ones that have to fund a lot of the damages.**
  - A. I never really thought about that, but we should try to get someone from AAA, or an insurance company involved in that and see if maybe there's any input from that. I know in the private sector, as a contractor, the insurance company had a lot of influence because now you're talking about the pocketbook and the effects on that.
- **Q. Commissioner Gerdes: Are there statistics on crashes where there are ages groups that are more prevalent?**
  - A. Not that I'm aware of, but I wouldn't doubt that there are statistics out there that talk about that as there are about people on phones.

#### REMARKS FROM THE CHAIR

- It is fall and there are a lot of harvest machines on the road, so please be aware. As always, I appreciate seeing the Buckle Up, Phone Down banner during the UNL games.

#### PUBLIC MEETINGS CALENDAR

- NDOT will hold a public meeting for the US-6/192<sup>nd</sup> Street Interchange, Omaha Project from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. on December 6, 2022, at Lutheran Church of the Master in Omaha, Nebraska.
- The next scheduled highway commission meeting is December 9, 2022, at 8:30 a.m. in the Highway Commission Room at NDOT Central Headquarters located at 1500 NE-2 in Lincoln, Nebraska

#### ADJOURNMENT

- The chair adjourned the meeting at 9:50 a.m.